NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT
(acre)
CODE 645

DEFINITION

Creating, restoring, maintaining or enhancing areas for food, cover, and water for upland wildlife and species which use upland habitat for a portion of their life cycle.

PURPOSE

- Provide a variety of food for the desired kinds of wildlife species;
- Provide a variety of cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife species, examples include nesting, fawning, loafing, resting, escape, travel lanes, and thermal'
- Provide drinking water for the desired kinds of wildlife species.
- Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and locations to benefit desired species.
- Manage the wildlife habitat to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all landscapes that are suitable for the kinds of wildlife habitat that are needed within the range of the desired species or the natural community under consideration.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

- Habitat development and, management necessary, to achieve the purpose(s), shall be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal or suitable habitat evaluation. The appraisal or evaluation procedure shall be used to determine a habitat suitability for either individual fields, home range areas, habitat type or natural community as well as to provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operating unit.

Habitat Appraisal or Habitat Evaluation:

- The evaluation will result in a quality rating or habitat suitability index (hsi). This will consider the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required. The quality rating or hsi will be compared to the quality criteria in Section III of the FOTG.
- If the Evaluation indicates a level below the acceptable quality, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary changes in habitat elements or their management to bring the rating up to the, minimal acceptable or above.

- If the evaluation is at the, minimum or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain or improve the existing habitat in its present state or toward optimum conditions.

Habitat Elements

- The following habitat elements will be considered when assessing wildlife habitat. Not all may apply to every habitat type.

1. Food
   a. Type
   b. Amount
2. Cover
   a. Type
   b. Amount
3. Water
   a. quality
   b. accessibility
   c. seasonal availability
4. Interspersion and Distance to
   a. crops
   b. grasses and or legumes
   c. shrubs
   d. trees
   e. water
   f. openings
5. Migration
   a. routes
   b. season of use
   c. corridors

Development and Management of Wildlife Habitat:

- As indicated by the wildlife habitat evaluation, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.
- The amount and kinds of habitat elements planned, their location and management shall be identified in a management plan.

The use of native plant materials shall be encouraged.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity shall be accomplished by prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.

Where feasible prescribed burning shall be used instead of mowing.

Livestock grazing or haying shall be conducted to maintain or improve vegetative structure and composition so as to improve the desired wildlife habitat.

Management measures shall be provided to control invasive species and noxious weeds.

To protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife and provide insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds shall be done on a “spot” basis.

CONSIDERATIONS

Wildlife population control (hunting to reduce numbers) which is the responsibility of state and federal wildlife agencies and the landowner may be necessary to protect and, maintain certain habitats.

Consider that manipulations of habitat may impact more than the desired kinds of wildlife. These possible effects shall be evaluated and taken into consideration during the planning process.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

For species requiring large blocks of habitat,

consider the problems of habitat fragmentation.

Consider habitat linkages and habitat corridors when developing upland wildlife habitat.

Consider effects of movement of dissolved substances on groundwater and on downstream surface waters.

Consider effects of hazardous materials expected or known to occur on the site on wildlife or human use related to wildlife.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulations (e.g., baiting).

Consider effects of management on non-target fish and wildlife species and Threatened and Endangered Species.

Consider effects of livestock grazing on runoff, infiltration, and wetland vegetation.

Consider using artificial nesting structures that are designed for the region.

Consider locating the management practice adjacent to existing wetlands and other water bodies.

Consider the impact of elevated wildlife uses on adjacent lands (e.g., crop depredation).

Consider the effect of volume and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration on the water budget.

Consider effects on movement of sediment, and soluble and sediment attached substances carried by runoff and/or wind.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or narrative documentation in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended over time.

A plan for operation and maintenance of upland wildlife habitat at a minimum shall include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

Timing of haying and livestock grazing will avoid periods when upland wildlife are nesting, fawning, etc. and will allow the establishment, development, and management of upland vegetation for the intended purpose.

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) shall be implemented where available and feasible.